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SUBJECT: Parkdale Community Hub: Feedback, Insights & Next Steps
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This report includes feedback from public and stakeholder engagement efforts in Spring 2019 on the proposed Parkdale Community Hub design options. The project is exploring the feasibility of consolidating City property in order to expand and improve community services the intersection of Queen Street West and Cowan Avenue in the Parkdale neighbourhood. The process included meetings with City divisions and agencies as well as the public. The meetings are outlined in the table below:

DATE (2019)	FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITY	PARTICIPANTS
April 24	Inter-Divisional Meeting	27
June 10	Community Meeting	~75

Insights and Recommendations

The feedback gathered from the inter-divisional meeting and the community meeting are generally consistent with no obvious flash points or conflicts. Both groups focused on preserving the culture of Parkdale and enhancing the services available to the local community. Option 3 received favourable reviews on both occasions, while both groups did not see value in Option 1.

The City divisions and agencies preferred Options 2 & 3, and the community meeting revealed a strong preference for Options 3 & 4 due to the ability to further expand housing and services.

Shared values and ideas

Preserve heritage value

Both groups emphasized the need to reflect and build on the community’s rich history and heritage. At the same time, they want to ensure the “new Parkdale” that will emerge through the revitalization is visually and culturally compatible with today’s neighbourhood. This emphasis complicates planned vertical developments as high- and mid-rise building are not considered part of the Parkdale aesthetic. There is also hesitation to demolish or damage older buildings, with both groups preferring to preserve the historical aspects.

Define affordability

The question of housing affordability was brought up separately in both meetings. People are overwhelmingly supportive but want to know what, exactly, “affordable” means. An attendee at the inter-divisional meeting stressed the importance of determining local definitions of affordability in comparison to city or provincial averages, while the community meeting saw an emphasis on understanding how the city would determine "affordable" rent relative to income.

Affordability was a consistent concern for local community members when discussing rent in housing as well as their ability to rent local retail spaces.

Create a welcoming space

The residents of Parkdale see their community as a welcoming, diverse and vibrant place and expect the surrounding architecture to reflect these values. One of the concerns about integrating taller buildings is that it will overwhelm the streetscape and detract from the character of Parkdale.

Differing viewpoints

The stakeholders at the inter-divisional meeting generally spoke of the greater social impact of the revitalization for community members. The public meeting saw more of a focus on specific details of the built form, logistics and potential day-to-day disruptions.

[Public Feedback Summary](#)

This section summarizes the feedback from the June 10, 2019 public meeting at Bonar-Parkdale Presbyterian Church. A more detailed summary of the June 10 Community Meeting can be found in Appendix A.

Option preferences

Options 3 & 4 received the most attention from the Parkdale community. They strongly support any efforts for the City to acquire the land currently occupied by Dollarama. In general, the community supports maximizing the amount of social housing and rebuilding the library on the west side of Cowan so that it can be integrated with the community centre.

The community was less interested in Options 1 & 2. Both options were criticized for lacking ambition, providing too little new housing, failing to integrate the library with the community centre, impacting current live/work spaces, and a lack of green space.

A hybrid “Option 5” slowly emerged in the group discussions, with separate work groups offering similar feedback. This option built on Options 3 & 4, but further integrated green space through green roofs, expanded the library to three-storeys to allow for increased community rooms and spaces, prioritizing preservation of historic buildings, and included support networks for entrepreneurs (see Appendix A).

Top priorities

1. Maximize and define affordable housing

Parkdale community members are overwhelmingly supportive of improving and expanding affordable housing options. Options 3 and 4 were both praised for an increased focus on providing housing options. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the official or applicable definition of affordable housing. Parkdale community members are uncomfortable fully supporting an affordable housing model for this site until it is determined how many affordable units each model could offer, the relative size and quality of these units, the approximate rental rates, and whether or not the rental rates would be geared-to-income.

2. Incorporate green space

The inclusion of green space was a running theme across discussion and assessment of all four community hub options. Community members were particularly excited by the courtyard noted in Option 3 and expressed a desire for increased green space in Options 1 & 2. In general, attendees would like more information about the potential revitalization of surrounding parks and green spaces – specifically Milky Way Garden – and would appreciate additional green installations, such as trees along sidewalks, to be marked on future hub layouts.

3. *Prioritize artists*

The role of local artists was frequently discussed, focusing on their influence in Parkdale’s culture but also in discussions of prioritizing public art. The community made it clear that they consider artists to be a core aspect of Parkdale, and would like to see a focus on spaces where the public can enjoy and interact with art. This included gallery space and making spaces available for outside exhibits. Some individuals mentioned a desire for affordable artist workspaces to be included in the community hub, as well as spaces for performance and exhibitions. The needs of current 1313 residents were also frequently brought up, including concerns about noise during construction, obstruction of natural light by taller buildings, and potential displacement during construction. Further, the community was unified in

4. *Bring the library and community centre together*

Options 3 & 4 were overwhelmingly preferred in the public meeting, as they both allowed for a complete library revitalization and overall expansion of programming. The community would like to be able to build a fully integrated library and community centre for an all-in-one civic building.

Concerns and Challenges

1. *Prevent private ownership*

The community clearly expressed they do not want any new housing spaces to be owned or controlled by the private sector. There is also a desire for any new retail spaces to be moderated by the City as opposed to the private sector. The community also strongly emphasized that they would like smaller, more affordable retail units accessible to local businesses to ensure they can compete and continue to contribute to the local culture and economy.

2. *Increase sidewalk space*

Community members feel that there is not enough sidewalk space in the current hub Options. The nature of this concern varies between accessibility, aesthetics, and the ability to use sidewalks for art displays or exhibitions. Some individuals suggested a raised walkway model, not unlike the elevated sections of the PATH network.

3. *Secure the Dollarama site*

Options 3 & 4 drew the most attention partly because they were the most ambitious. In particular, the community believes the eventual purchase of the Dollarama lot is paramount. Options 1 & 2 were less favourable as they failed to provide the City control over the adjacent property, thereby restricting expansion of community services or forcing collaboration with the private sector.

4. *Incorporate street-level retail*

Options 3 & 4 both allow for the opening of new retail and community services within the community hub. Community members suggest essential retailers like grocery stores be given

priority to open on the street level, while services that may only require visiting once a month are relegated to upper levels.

5. Improve scope + understanding of project

The Parkdale community seems to be unsure of the exact scope of the community revitalization, likely due to the different options presented and considerations of how each option could interact with other ongoing community projects. The role of the TCHC apartment building at 245 Dunn Ave. was brought up several times at the public meeting. Although the Parkdale Hub project is not proposing any impacts to this building or its tenants some current residents were unclear about this and would like further assurances to be provided that their housing will not be affected or incorporated into the hub.

6. Strategically plan phasing

As discussions of this project progress, the community will continue to press decision-makers about the sequencing of construction. During the public meeting, concerns were voiced regarding any potential temporary library closure and the effect this would have on the community. Similarly, the residents of 1313 were concerned about how their live/work spaces would be disrupted or if they would be temporarily displaced, while others raised concerns about the gallery hours and operation through the construction period. The project team advised that a construction phasing strategy will be developed in future project phases through ongoing discussions with the community, and will aim to minimize impacts on current programs and tenants.

Stakeholder Feedback Summary

This section summarizes the feedback received from different City of Toronto divisions and agencies on April 24, 2019, at St. Lawrence Hall. A more detailed summary can be found in Appendix B.

As previously noted, the concerns and preferences from the Inter-divisional meeting are similar to those from the Community Meeting. Option 3 was the preferred model, with division and agency representatives noting that this option struck a delicate balance between development and heritage preservation.

Option 1 received the most critical feedback, as attendees noted the minuscule land allotment for housing and the lack of green space.

Twenty-seven stakeholders attended the meeting, offering representation from the following groups:

- Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration, City of Toronto
- Toronto Public Library
- Social Development, Finance, and Administration, City of Toronto
- City Planning, City of Toronto
- Parks, Forestry & Recreation, City of Toronto
- Toronto Public Health
- Affordable Housing Office, City of Toronto
- Councillor Perks' Office
- Toronto Community Housing Corporation
- Toronto Parking Authority

- Artscape

Priorities

1. *Incorporate green space*

Much like the public meeting, the attendees of the inter-divisional meeting prioritized green space. The courtyard feature in Option 3 was well reviewed.

2. *Integrate social services*

Ensuring the community hub is accessible and offers assistance to local residents was a common theme throughout the discussion. The overall social impact of the revitalization was emphasized, including conversations focused on the economic standing of the community, social service usage and ensuring public safety. Specific questions were asked about how new services can be seamlessly integrated with current offerings to ensure the community is adequately supported. Breakfast programs, homelessness services and youth programming were all explicitly mentioned as ways to ensure the community is supported.

Challenges

1. *Define and determine affordability*

One attendee noted the importance of determining the definition of 'affordable' in relation to new housing opportunities at this site – a sentiment echoed at the June 10 community meeting. More specifically, concerns arose about whether or not the specific market conditions and economic trends in Parkdale were being considered, as opposed to trends within the City of Toronto as a whole.

Process & Next Steps

This section includes the process and next steps the project team shared with the community at the June 10 community meeting and shared online at the <http://www.parkdale.ca> website.

Current Status

- Preliminary Due Diligence
 - *Completed Winter 2018*
- Community Engagement – Vision and Guiding Principles
 - *Completed Summer 2018*
- Conceptual Design & Massing Study
 - *Currently underway*
- Preliminary Costing Analysis
 - *Currently underway*
- Planning Studies (Heritage Conservation District Plan & West Queen West Framework)
 - *Ongoing*

Work Plan

PHASE 1: FEASIBILITY STUDY

